The Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success, established in 2005, has worked with 39 schools to develop programmes of high quality data systems for target setting and tracking student progress, providing evidence for detailed academic conversations across the school. Established as a Partnership for Excellence, the project’s main purpose has been to identify and address barriers that prevent participation and success in degree-level study, especially for Māori and Pasifika students.

After 11 years the Starpath Project is nearing the end of its current funding and has focused its work on:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Starpath Project as a means to improve student achievement rates and to address barriers that prevent participation and success at degree-level study.
- Assisting schools to develop a school-wide data culture and embed the Starpath strategies within common practice of teachers, students and school leaders.
- Ensuring the long term sustainability of these successful practices.

As this is the last Annual Report for Starpath Phase 2, it is important to acknowledge the participation of students from Auckland and Northland, and their teachers and school leaders in the research and development programme. Through the partnerships with schools, the project is learning a great deal about what enables and inhibits Māori and Pasifika students and others from mid-low socio-economic areas to gain entry and succeed within degree-level study.

The Starpath Project also wishes to acknowledge and thank its major sponsors: the Tertiary Education Commission and the ASB Community Trust (now known as Foundation North). This work of social and economic importance would not have been possible without the generous support of these sponsors.
These strategies have now been used in 39 schools to assist in the progression of all students and teachers in three-way discussions on academic choices and requirements, goal setting and achievement particularly for Māori, Pacific and other students in low decile schools during this time. Over the next few years we will continue to find ways to share these learnings in our publications, public seminars and other professional development opportunities through the university of Auckland.

This is our final year of TEC and AIB Community Trust (Foundation North) funding. As we transition out of this funding we remain committed to working with schools to improve the academic outcomes for learners. We will continue to offer our Starpath approach in a number of ways including:

- seeking new sources of funding to continue school support and research
- offering short courses on equity in education, student achievement using data, and achievement for priority learners including Māori, Pacific and low income students
- looking for research and training opportunities to disseminate our learning from 10 years of invaluable work.

We have spent this year completing a number of obligations for Starpath in schools, offering leadership and literacy training, QUACs and undertaking even more rigorous analysis of our data so that we can identify where the best opportunities for shared learning exists and how best to share these with other schools and the broader educational community. Our analysis highlights some of the successes of Starpath with most schools increasing their HCEA and UE results during the course of the project. 2014, however, proved a difficult year for many schools with UE results lower than hoped because of changes to requirements for entry. This is a profound disappointment given our strong commitment to increasing Māori, Pacific and low income students’ entry into degree level study. As our understanding of the causes of this decline improves, we will be involved in designing advice and strategies to better prepare students for gaining this qualification.

The Ministry of Education funded a year 9 and 10 extension project in 2014 that demonstrated improvements for that year with a shift in reading and maths to higher curriculum levels. This was noticeable for Māori and Pacific students where around 60% achieved at curriculum Level 4 or higher by the end of the year.

From the Chair

As the Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success nears the end of its time as a Partnership for Excellence with the Government, it is essential that we look back on its aims, how far it has succeeded in meeting these aims and what we might have learned from the project.

When the University of Auckland started the Starpath Project, it identified its mission as ‘bringing about a dramatic transformation in educational and economic outcomes for those groups of students currently under-represented in higher education in new Zealand’ (Starpath was about ‘new opportunities’, aiming to ‘ensure that New Zealanders from all walks of life can enter and succeed in advanced tertiary qualifications and high skill employment’). These were fine words. Starpath was based on the view that students who had the capacity and the desire to progress into tertiary study should be set on a pathway leading to that goal. Research by Starpath team members identified strategies that schools could use to help students to maintain direction and reach their destination: counselling on academic choices and requirements, goal setting, tracking progress, involving whānau, students and teachers in three-way discussions on student aspirations and how these might be met. These strategies have now been used in 39 schools throughout Auckland and Northland. The Starpath team has collected 10 years of data on achievement for thousands of students and has over 400 in-depth interviews and observations to increase our understanding of how to engage in discussions that motivate and produce better outcomes. An ambitious publication and dissemination strategy has been developed to share what we have learnt with other schools, educators, academics and decision-makers.

Overall, students in Starpath schools have demonstrated significant gains in achievement. There are new ways of doing things and great new relationships. The 2014 University entrance results, however, were a disappointment. With changes to the common entrance standard that had been flagged some three years before, the success rates took a tumble and the greatest fall was in low decile schools. Changes in patterns of the courses students take appear to have played a significant part in the decline. We need to understand this better. The pathway to degree-level study leads to skilled employment, higher incomes and confident citizenship. This pathway must be kept open for those young people who want to travel it.

The Annual Report 2014-15 is the last in this phase of Starpath activity. The work that Starpath started will not end here. One of the most heartening signs in the last year is that several teachers from Starpath schools have moved into senior positions in schools around the country and have indicated that they will introduce Starpath strategies for enhancing achievement into their new schools. It has been a privilege to be associated with Starpath and the dedicated principals, teachers and staff who have worked with it.

Professor Raewyn Dalziel
Chair, Starpath Board

From the Director

Whoa te kākāriki i tūwheraha te tīna iwa i te maunga teitahi
Seek for those treasures that you value and if you bow your head it’ll be a lofty mountain

Starpath has worked in partnership with 39 secondary schools within Northland and Auckland over the past 10 years. We have learned an enormous amount about what it takes to raise achievement particularly for Māori, Pacific and other students in low decile schools during this time. Over the next few years we will continue to find ways to share these learnings in our publications, public seminars and other professional development opportunities through the university of Auckland.

This is our final year of TEC and AIB Community Trust (Foundation North) funding. As we transition out of this funding we remain committed to working with schools to improve the academic outcomes for learners. We will continue to offer our Starpath approach in a number of ways including:

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The Ministry of Education funded a year 9 and 10 extension project in 2014 that demonstrated improvements for that year with a shift in reading and maths to higher curriculum levels. This was noticeable for Māori and Pacific students where around 60% achieved at curriculum Level 4 or higher by the end of the year.

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to Starpath’s success – especially our partner schools. Thanks also to the many staff who contributed. We have shared the vision of academic achievement for all students and especially those traditionally excluded from degree level study. This has been a wonderful journey and one which will continue as we take the lessons from Starpath into a new form during 2016.

Nuku noa

Professor Cindy Kiro
Director, Starpath

From the Governance Board

The initial proposal to the Government for the Starpath Project included a commitment to establish a Board of senior leaders from partner organisations and people with a high level of experience and expertise in the delivery of equal education opportunities. This Board was constituted during 2008 and met for the first time in December of that year under the chairmanship of Dr John Langley, then Dean of the Faculty of Education within the University of Auckland.

Since that first meeting, the board has met four times a year and has approved strategic, operational and business plans for Starpath. It has monitored the performance of the project against these plans, Starpath’s original goals and the key performance indicators agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission. The Board has assisted the project in fundraising, and approved the Annual Report and research reports. At each meeting the board has received information on staffing, financial management, and interactions with schools, Government and the media. However, the most important reports the Board has received have been the annual reports on student achievement in Starpath schools and on progression to degree level studies. These reports have provided the data on which we have measured the success of Starpath activities in schools.

In this final annual report it seems appropriate to acknowledge the contribution that a number of people have made to Starpath through membership of the Board. They have been essential advisers, supporters, critics and friends of the project. The members have included, at different times, Dr Helen Anderson and Dr Stuart Medallion; members of the staff of Manukau Institute of Technology which was a partner in Starpath in its initial phase; two of the original designers of the project, Distiguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond and Professor Michael Walker; former Principals, Mr Bill Gbell and Mr Gil Laurenson; members of the Ministry of Education, Mr Rob McIntosh, Mr Anne Jackson and Dr Graham Stoop; Faculty of Education staff, Professor Graeme Aitken, Dr Brian Anman, Dr Airini, and Professor Stuart McNab; Centre for Pacific Studies staff, Mr Walter Fraser and Associaate Professor Damon Saltos. From August 2008, the board had been chaired by Professor Raewyn Dalziel.

The Board itself recognises the commitment, expertise and knowledge that the staff of Starpath have brought to the project. It has appreciated the high level of staff engagement with the goals of Starpath, the constant willingness to be accountable, to be accessible and, above all, to focus on outcomes for students.
Towards Sustainability

After more than a decade working with schools, Starpath’s focus has shifted to how the programme can be made sustainable over the long term.

At this stage of the project the Starpath strategies have, to a large degree, been adopted in all 34 Group A and B schools. As a consequence, the emphasis in 2013/14 work in schools has shifted from the introduction of a Starpath approach to embedding strategies into school practice. The project has continued to provide support for the five original partner schools where requested. As the focus has shifted from introduction to sustainability, there has been a move from whole group professional development to more of an individual school approach. We have offered on-site visits tailored to meet identified needs of the school, for example developing deeper understanding of all the data to indicate next steps in classroom practice, and developing data inquiry skills for effective data team discussions. There have also been requests for academic counselling and flawless conference training for staff new to schools, which we have responded to by providing training and support in schools.

Group B schools evaluation

In the second half of 2014 we evaluated the work in the 18 Group B schools that joined Starpath in 2012. This follows on from the evaluation of the Starpath programme in Group A schools in 2013 (reported in the 2013-14 Annual Report). As with the previous evaluation, school leaders, teachers and students were invited to take part in individual interviews or focus groups. Each school received individual feedback in a written report sent out in December 2014. As with Group A schools, each report provided a summary of the school’s NCEA results over the previous three years; the views of school leaders, teachers and students on the impact and effectiveness of the Starpath programme; the challenges, and work that still remained to be done. Initial analysis of the Group A & B evaluation is reported in the Research Summary p 15.

Original partner school interviews

In addition, in 2015 we conducted a more limited evaluation in the five original partner schools. Individual interviews were conducted with a total of 20 senior and middle leaders, focusing mostly on how the programme is functioning some six to eight years after its introduction and the issues of sustainability.

One important finding from the evaluation with both Group B and original partner schools is that in most cases schools feel positive about the sustainability of the programme. This is despite the challenges of implementation, including time, workloads, staff, PLD, and achieving quality in the delivery of academic counselling. The reasons given included:

- It has become normal practice and both students and parents expect to have data-informed, achievement-focused conversations with a teacher who knows the student and is supportive of his or her aspirations.
- It is effective and the benefits (in terms of improved relationships and student achievement) outweigh the costs (in terms of staff time and effort).
- It is adaptable and able to work in different schools, as well as being able to be refined over time in response to external changes.
- It did not come with financial or personnel resources and therefore it is not dependent on external resources to continue.

It is important to note that not all schools have made the same progress and some senior leaders have made deliberate decisions to limit the extent to which different aspects of the Starpath programme have been implemented in their schools.

There have been major benefits of increased achievement for Māori and Pasifika students (and indeed all students) in these schools. Taking the Pasifika Level 1 results for the Phase 2A schools for example, we can interpret the results in this way: for every 100 Pasifika students in Phase 2A schools, there were 14 more Pasifika students obtaining their NCEA Level 1 certificate after intervention than before.

Aggregating data in this way can mask variability across the schools. The figure below shows the shifts for each of the 38 schools (including the original partner schools) since intervention, along with the national shift in the same period of time that each school has been associated with Starpath.

The number of schools that improved ranged from 27 for UE (75% of schools) to 37 for Level 2 (81% of schools), and the majority of them were making improvements in excess of the national rate of change.

We acknowledge that these improvements cannot be solely attributed to the Starpath Project, but there are strong indications of positive change in the period in which we have worked with teachers in these schools to raise student achievement. There are often multiple initiatives operating in schools, and there could be a very complex interaction among those initiatives to produce these improvements. In addition, there are contextual factors that come into play such as variation in the way in which different schools adopted the Starpath-led initiatives, changes in school leadership and direction, changes in the UE requirements that raised the standard required for entry to university, and national policy imperatives such as Vocational Pathways and the Better Public Service target of 85% of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 by 2017.

More detailed analyses are currently being conducted, as well as case studies to delve deeper into the data, to tease out what Tony Bryk and his colleagues from the Chicago collaboration on school improvement desire be as “what works for whom, under what set of conditions?” (Bryk et al, 2015, p73-14). Bryk et al go on to say “That we cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure” (2015, p 14). The answer to these questions and issues will help us understand what makes the biggest difference in terms of supporting student achievement across Starpath schools and what else is needed to support schools that are still struggling.

Reference

Working with the Ministry of Education

A final analysis of the Starpath Extension Project: Years 9 and 10.

Years 9 and 10 Extension

The extension of the Starpath programme to Years 9 and 10 students ran throughout 2014 to the end of March 2015. Starpath supported the 24 partner schools involved by providing effective professional learning development, assisting with student achievement data through the existing database, tracking and monitoring visits, and progress checks of each school’s action plan.

Key goals of the Year 9 and 10 Extension project were:

1. To raise Year 9 and 10 student achievement as measured by improved aTTle/e-aTTle, and PAT test scores, and evidence-gathering numbers of students performing at or above, the expected curriculum level.
2. To identify priority learner groups, barriers to their achievement, and the most appropriate strategies to ensure they attain maximum benefit from the programme and experience improvement in achievement.
3. To improve the capacity of schools and teachers to use data to track and monitor junior secondary students’ progress, and to use evidence to adjust classroom practices to support student learning and achievement with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills.

Specific monitoring and evaluation methods were used to measure the impact of this extension project on student achievement, literacy, and numeracy. A continuing focus on Year 10 students, especially in the area of literacy, is required. At the project’s conclusion the demand for subject specific literacy professional development remained strong.

Results on student achievement emphasise the importance of students being “secondary ready” by the time they complete Year 11. This means that students need to be at or about Curriculum Level 4 on entry to high school. Across reading, comprehension and mathematics we can see that accelerated progress can be made which provides more students with the skills and knowledge they require for a successful journey through the three years of NCEA and on to tertiary study.

Key findings from the Evaluation (Years 9 and 10)

1. Changes in several project areas have indicated that there needs to be a continuing focus on Year 10 students, especially in the area of literacy, to provide the numeracy support needed for this project.
2. Three workshops based on numeracy were delivered during the time of this project. From August 2014 to March 2015, 141 teachers from 30 partner schools attended. The workshops focused on strengthening knowledge and practice in numeracy and measurement, geometry and algebra at the junior school level. The practical nature of these workshops provided teachers with teaching strategies that could be directly used in the classroom.
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**Towards Sustainability: Partner Schools’ Updates**

**Manganuia-Broadwood Area School**

There are many challenges in being a predominantly Māori, small, geographically isolated, area school, responsible for the education of students from Year 1 to Year 13.

Staffing the school is always a struggle. Young, single teachers come but they miss the big city. More experienced teachers come with their families but they too feel the pull of larger towns and the employment and social opportunities their families need. It’s a challenge needing a lot of energy and care into new teachers, knowing that in a year or two they will move on. It’s also hard for our teachers to have to teach across different levels in the same class, and to teach subjects that are not always in their primary area of expertise. Dedicated, expert teachers are a gift, a taonga we treasure and try to keep for as long as possible.

There is always the temptation to focus on the short-term achievements of our students who love their kapa haka, and need to be successful in a cultural context. These are important skills and it is good that students can get credits in these areas as well as in work-based learning through Gateway or STAR programmes. But that isn’t enough. It’s far too easy to overlook the academic potential of these children.

As a school we became a challenge to refocus on our students’ academic learning and achievement, as well as on their need to become active and more independent learners. We needed to help our children to become strong learners – that they can become nasal officers and plumbers, teachers and nurses, accountants and business owners. But to get there they are not going to do it on their own. We need to involve our community, the whole community, those who care about our children and want the best for them.

We also wanted them to have confidence to explore the world, even if mostly via the internet, and to identify the opportunities and pathways to the future. Starpath has helped us to tackle a fresh look at our students’ potential to learn, and to be real with ourselves and our students. It helped us to clarify the difference between “learning” (in academic subjects) and “behaviour” (in terms of sporting and kapa haka skills). In particular, it challenged us to look at the quality of learning and the pathways the learning we were providing were creating for our students. We realised that we re, maths and computing might result in students achieving NCEA levels 2 and, or even level 3, but were not enough to prepare them to go on to tertiary education. As a school we had to be more accountable to our students and our community.

Starpath provided professional development, but most importantly, it brought that learning to us (to Pāhua), which meant that over time all our teachers could attend and develop shared knowledge and skills. Just as importantly, Starpath team members provided one-on-one visits, mentoring, and feedback as we worked on student data and tracking systems, and implemented academic counselling and three-way parent-student-teacher conferences. Kanohi kei kanohi (face to face) relationships are really important in Māori schools such as this one and they have helped us to share problems and ask for help. It has been good to learn together.

We now know that when we don’t deliver what we promise the students and the parents will hold us accountable. We have taught the parent how to expect to see evidence of their children’s learning in each report they receive, not just nice words, but measurable evidence of progress, even in our primary school. Recently, a mother of a first year primary school child complained to me. “Aunty, there was no evidence. I was told how good my baby was but there was no evidence. That’s not good enough.” Our young parents have got it and we have to deliver.

We learned to look back in order to look forward. To use longitudinal data to see how well students had done in the past, what they needed to do well now, where they wanted to go in the future, and whether we are helping them to learn and to gain credits to help them get there. We still have a lot of work to do, but we can see changes. Our Year 10 and 11 students who had had academic counselling for the past couple of years are expressing higher aspirations and are so their parents. The students are comfortable using new technologies to research a topic they are studying, or to link to a class lesson when stranded at home by flooded roads. And they are proud to share their academic achievements. It tells a lot about a deeper change that’s taking place when I see one of our girls posting on her Facebook page recently, “I just got a merit!” and to see the conversation develop: “What for?” “ENGLISH!” “Way to go!”

We want our students to be good at sport and to be confident and proud in te reo and tikanga Māori, but we also want them to be successful academically. At the moment the girls are the ones doing well in the school but we want to see the boys also doing well. We are aiming the way that the boys are learning and they are coming along.

In conversation with Pani Hauraki, Principal, Manganuia-Broadwood Area School

**Aorere College**

Sustaining change and managing multiple initiatives in a large urban school

Aorere College, a large urban school, joined the Starpath Project in 2011. Starpath strategies are deeply embedded in school practice to the point where the teachers and leadership team no longer see the term “Starpath” when they refer to school processes for academic conversations and tracking achievement.

Over the last few years the school has agreed to participate in a number of professional development initiatives. At the start of 2015 they counted five major initiatives, not including Starpath. All the initiatives were seen as important in the work of raising student achievement but it was also recognised that each initiative could potentially have a different set of requirements and demands on the school.

At the start of 2015 the Ministry of Education facilitated a meeting of the providers of these initiatives. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure that every project was able to see who else was working in the school; that everyone would get to hear what the different demands were; and that demands on the school, particularly related to data, could be streamlined. The school also took this opportunity to outline to the external facilitators its strategic plan and the data that were being collected to demonstrate how the school was meeting its strategic goals.

Aorere College is a busy place and it is easy for teachers to be overwhelmed by the urgent drive of any major initiatives. The planned approach by the senior leaders allows teachers, grounded in the day to day reality of the classroom to see the bigger picture and gain a sense of their part in the wider plan. For Starpath strategies to be sustained in this environment of multiple initiatives the project must continue to be relevant to the plan and be seen as normal practice in the school.

In conversation with Leanne Webb, Associate Principal Aorere College

**Whangarei Girls’ High School**

Responding to feedback to develop a sustainable model

Whangarei Girls’ High School is a large rural school, with 2800 students, 100 staff and 20 boarders. The school has three campuses: Whangarei Girls, Whangarei High and Māori and Pacific Student Pathways into University. The school also took this opportunity to outline the data that were to be collected to demonstrate how the school was meeting its strategic goals, the demands made on the school, particularly related to data; and ensure that every project was able to see who else was working in the school; that everyone would get to hear what the different demands were; and that demands on the school, particularly related to data, could be streamlined. Starpath has also led to a fresh look at the school’s academic conversations and tracking achievement. The school also took this opportunity to outline to the external facilitators its strategic plan and the data that were being collected to demonstrate how the school was meeting its strategic goals.

In 2009 Whangarei Girls’ joined the Enhancing Māori and Pacific Student Pathways into University project. Through the project the school developed a strong teacher/student support programme, known as the STAR program. As a result of the STAR program, eight academic coaches were selected and trained. Each coaching session involved a small group of students with one coach. The STAR program is based on academic progress and school experiences. A student would be withdrawn from class for these 30 minute sessions twice to three times a year.

When the Starpath project came along in 2011 Whangarei Girls’ saw the new project as an opportunity to continue the coaching work and support it by a deeper understanding of data and tracking progress. In more recent times the school’s leadership team started to receive feedback, both anecdotal and through starpath’s evaluation report, to suggest that the students were looking for a more individualised approach. They wanted more regular contact with someone who knew them, their aspirations and their progress. They wanted a more deliberate time for this conversation that would not interrupt their classroom work. In 2014 the school took deliberate steps to develop its academic counselling model in response to this feedback.

The Principal, Anne Cooper, is adamant that every student has the right to have someone who knows and cares for them as a learner – someone who helps to set the right direction, who will ensure they get help early enough to make certain that when they leave school they have choices.

With this in mind the school has asked whānau teachers to take on the role of advisor. In the new model, accepted by the whole staff, teachers are invited to apply for the role. To demonstrate the value placed on the role, whānau teachers are given a time allowance (two hours per week) and are expected to be accountable to the Principal for that time. The role proved to be popular and there was no difficulty recruiting staff.

Sustaining innovation in a small rural school

As this new arrangement develops there has been plenty of opportunity for discussion and training. Deans and senior leaders have had discussions to determine what the role of whānau teacher should look like and, while outside facilitation through Starpath is available, there is confidence that current staff can provide models of good practice. There is also thought going into training senior students in the role of “big sister” for junior class members.

Next year the school plans to include an extended period of time within the timetable to allow the individual conversations to take place without disruption to class time.

A shift in the model is difficult as enthusiastic teachers come to terms with new expectations, although strong direction from a development team along with deliberate planning and training, including plenty of opportunity for open discussion, means Whangarei Girls’ is working steadily towards a sustainable strategy that is responsive to student needs.

In conversation with Anne Cooper, Principal Whangarei Girls’ High School
Leadership over the long term – maintaining a focus on goals

The University of Auckland Centre for Educational Leadership (UACEL) shares the results of research into Group A and B schools pre and post-intervention.

“Today’s schools don’t need ‘instructional leaders’ who attempt to ensure that teachers use the right moves. Instead, schools need learning leaders who create a school-wide focus on learning both for students and the adults who serve them.”

(Dufour and Mattos, 2013, p40)

This quote from Dufour and Mattos sums up our approach to leadership development; we do not want to develop leaders who ‘micro-manage teachers’ but we do want to develop leaders who are problem solvers and are both effective learners themselves and leaders who can help the other adults in the organisation to be effective learners also.

The key skills of being a leader are difficult to acquire and to implement; they involve the ability to analyse the current situation, to inquire into causes and to respond to those by setting appropriate goals and making plans for improvement. But that is just the start of the job; the real leadership challenge is maintaining the goal focus during the year and working with other leaders and teachers to check that progress is being made.

What has UACEL’s research from Group A and Group B schools told us about some of these types of behavioural patterns in schools? We analysed school plans and data from questionnaires that had been administered at two different time points: prior to intervention (Time 1) and post-intervention (Time 2).

Planning effectiveness

The obvious positive pattern in the annual plans was that almost all schools had some form of baseline data and, to a greater or lesser degree, were using so-called, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) targets. The plans usually also stated what was to be done and by whom in order to improve outcomes. Some of the basics of good planning were strongly evident. Particularly in Time 2, plans tended to have strong alignment between a clear vision, as articulated in the strategic section of the schools’ plans, and the annual goals and targets. It was also more frequently noted that plans were easy to read at Time 2, suggesting that some of these data were becoming potentially more usable documents in their later iterations. Overall, the basic mechanics of annual planning, and specifically goal and target setting behaviours, were well embedded.

Baseline data and problem analysis

Most schools, however, appeared to lack a really sharp focus on a few problem areas, which was evidenced by plans having a lot of targets. For example, while schools tended to put baseline data in plans for targets about qualifications, there was often no such data for other problems such as poor attendance or frequent lateness – and yet other evidence (see the problem solving section) indicates that, for many schools, these problems are serious and need addressing. Further, while some form of baseline data was in most plans, these data were not always easy to find, to read, or to make sense of, because of the way they were set out, perhaps betraying a lack of deeper analysis and clear problem identification.

This widespread characteristic led us to make the following recommendation:

That school collect data of interest and display it clearly (possibly in their strategic section of their plans) or in a grid so that all data can be reviewed systematically for patterns over time.

We hasten to add, though, that because one collects all these data, does not imply that one should target every area.

Goal and target setting behaviour

On average, schools had three broad academic goals (goals pertaining to presence, engagement or achievement), which does not sound too onerous, but they mostly had a great many more targets. For example, in Group B, Time 2, schools had, on average, nine academic targets. The general pattern from plans was that a school ‘targeted’ Year 9 and 10 literacy and numeracy results, NCEA 1, 2 and 3 results, and University Entrance. Many schools had numerous other academic targets as well. While most schools also targeted Māori or Pasifika student achievement, it tended to be across all of the categories for which all students were targeted, thereby doubling the number of targets. Schools had up to 30 targets recorded in various parts of their plans. This is not targeting – targets imply prioritising one or two areas of need. The overall effect of the sheer number of goals/target objectives, not to mention initiatives that were often named as goals, was that goals were not memorable; school leaders often struggled to recall what their goals or targets were.

Goal knowledge

If senior and middle leaders do not even know what their goals are, they can hardly expect staff to know and to help to achieve them. Obviously the more goals a school has, the less likely they are to be recalled and worked on by staff. Over the two time points, leaders from senior management teams were able to recall their school goals with about 55% accuracy, while middle management teams, on average, recalled goals with about 40% accuracy. These results did not change significantly over all leaders across the intervention period. Individual leader scores varied widely, from nil to 100%. Some teams of leaders also scored averages across that full range, in other words there were some leadership teams where all members could recall all their goals and other teams where no members could recall, with sufficient accuracy, any school goals at all. Not surprisingly, the high scoring teams were invariably from schools with a few, clear, memorable goals. In some cases these had been distilled from the full plans and published separately as diagrams that could be put up around the school.

Problem solving behaviour

As part of the annual improvement plan, leaders need to address issues that are perceived to be obstructing improvement. We checked how serious middle leaders perceived key barriers to be, asked senior leaders to predict those rankings, and invited both teams of leaders to rate themselves and one another as to their effectiveness in contributing to problem solving against each barrier. We noted an interesting pattern between seriousness of the problems (as rated by middle leaders) and the effectiveness with which each problem was seen as being dealt with by senior leaders. In general, while the possible exception of student literary levels, the more serious the problem, the less likely it was to be seen as being dealt with effectively by senior leaders. These perceptions are no doubt interdependent to some extent (i.e., are they dealt with less effectively because they are serious, or are they viewed as serious because they are not being actively dealt with?). We presented leaders with 13 possible barriers to rate. Results from whole group data include the following:

• Teacher access to student data and cultural responsiveness to students were rated by middle leaders as relatively less serious and well dealt with. These two findings may also be a result of interventions such as Starpath and Ti Kitahanga.

To improve school performance, leaders need to create a coherent environment; coherence is promoted by prioritising and monitoring progress on a few problems. This analysis led to our second major recommendation:

That schools analyse their data carefully and only target a few, serious problem areas – and monitor progress on those areas every term.

Linda Bendikson and Mark Broadwith, UACEL

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The programme also had a subject-specialised strand in teaching students about paragraph writing and to use consistent terminology, for example, teachers in a school using similar literacy teaching approaches at these workshops was on increasing students’ reading and writing capabilities across all subject areas, including English, mathematics and science.

It is delivered via professional learning and development (PLD) for school leaders and subject leaders, and is led by Dr Aaron Wilson from the Woolf Fisher Research Centre, supported by Tania Linley-Richardson, Starpath PLD facilitator.

The literacy programme is a blended model addressing both generic and subject-specific features of literacy. The generic strand of the programme consisted of four workshops in which school and subject leaders worked together to discuss student achievement and literacy teaching data and to learn about, plan and reflect on shared approaches. This strand was important because many principles of effective literacy and language teaching are applicable to all subject areas. It is also recognised that teaching will be more effective when they align to address common learning goals. This can be difficult to achieve in secondary schools because students have different teachers for each subject and traditionally there are few opportunities for teachers from different departments to collaborate. One shared focus at these workshops was on increasing students’ opportunities to read rich and challenging texts in all subject areas. Another was on different teachers in a school using similar literacy teaching approaches to address identified student needs and to use consistent terminology, for example, when teaching students about paragraph writing.

The programme also had a subject-specialised strand in which teachers and leaders of English, mathematics and science learnt about literacy demands and effective teaching approaches in the context of their own subject. This strand built on previous research in schools on the West Coast of the South Island conducted by Dr Wilson and Woolf Fisher Research Centre colleagues, which showed that teachers can find it easier to use new literacy teaching approaches when literacy professional development is tailored to their specific subject. One reason for this is that teachers may more easily see the usefulness and applicability of teaching approaches when they are contextualised in their own subject area. Another reason is that the literacy knowledge students need becomes more complex and more subject-specialised as they move into and through secondary school. For instance, secondary students will seldom, if ever, be required to read literary texts such as novels, plays, and poems in any subject other than English, and mathematics word problems are almost exclusive to mathematics. Numerical documents to history, and scientific research reports to science.

Similarly, each subject also has its own highly specialised technical vocabulary and students are unlikely to encounter the word(s) or concept(s) being taught in any subject other than English, and mathematics word problems are almost exclusive to mathematics. Numerical documents to history, and scientific research reports to science.

Another important shift was in the area of strategy instruction which increased across subjects from 7% in 2013 to 10% in 2014. Strategy instruction increased from 0% to 17% in mathematics, 19% to 34% in biology and 0% to 17% in English. These are potentially important shifts because there is a large body of research supporting the effectiveness of explicit literacy instruction to raise students’ metacognition and because ratios prior to the literacy programme had been low.

Detailed analyses of classroom observations, NCEA data, and measures of middle leaders’ knowledge of literacy in their own subject area are currently being undertaken to find out more about the nature of these shifts associated with the literacy programme, and what can be done to make programmes like this more effective.

Analyses of effectiveness

Preliminary analyses of classroom observations provide evidence of some positive shifts in literacy teaching in all three subject areas: English, science, and mathematics. The observers recorded details about the lessons including properties of texts used, teaching activities, how students were grouped, forms of differentiation, and the focus and characteristics of any literacy instruction. Providing a 50% sampling of each lesson.

The percent of blocks in which students were presented with some form of written text to read increased on average from 65% in 2013 to 84% in 2014. There was also an increase in the length of the texts provided. In 2013 texts of 600 words or longer were only observed in 4% of all blocks but in 2014 were observed in 17% of blocks. This was particularly evident in biology with an increase from 4% to 19%, and in English with an increase from 10% to 38%. Books as the original source of texts were observed in 9% of blocks in 2013 but 15% of blocks in 2014. These are positive shifts because one of the concerns we had raised with schools in the PLD was the limited opportunities observed in 2013 for reading challenging disciplinary texts in subject areas.

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Programme Evaluation for DUACTS Group A and B Schools

Evaluation of the 34 Group A and B Schools is building a picture of how effective the DUACTS programme has been in supporting changes in practice to enhance student achievement.

Across Phase 2 the DUACTS team has focused on enabling schools to continually improve data utilisation, to drive effective target setting, tracking, and monitoring; and to hold powerful academic conversations, including those with families, while at the same time communicating high expectations of all students. From the evaluation we are learning about inspiring schools to implement, leading to mixed results of student achievement and a lack of impact in some areas. We are continuing to analyse our data and to identify enablers and barriers to Māori and Pacific students and others from schools serving low socio-economic areas, achieving equitable academic outcomes. Below we highlight some of the preliminary themes related to impact and effectiveness of implementation. These themes emerge from analysis of 2022 Phase 2 interviews with students, teachers and school leaders.

Student views

511 students participated in 83 student focus group interviews across the 34 Phase 2 secondary schools. Nvivo analysis revealed 94% of comments made in these interviews contained positive comments on academic counselling. Māori and Pacific students in particular spoke positively about the academic counselling programme for students in the senior years, but they also saw the benefits for its implementation at Years 9 and 10. Senior students argued that an earlier intervention would result in better informed and prepared students for the academic journey that would ultimately lead to advanced education and/or employment.

A number of positive intersetated themes emerged from student interviews and included:

• Improved communication (and its timeliness) about matters pertaining to student achievement between students and teachers;
• Improved relationships between students and teachers with teachers being more responsive to students’ needs;
• Student/teacher/parent meetings facilitated improved communication and awareness of student achievement/goals;
• Students saw positive impacts from improved academic counselling practices upon their aspirations and on their current motivation and performance.

Whilst there were many positive comments, students were also concerned about low teacher and community expectations of Māori and Pacific student success and about negative stereotypes of students as ‘low achievers’. Students also shared concerns about poor quality academic counselling and ineffective teaching practices within their school.

Research Summary

The last 12 months have been extremely busy for the three Starpath-led initiatives.
School leaders participated in individual interviews and 310 teachers participated in 9 focus groups across A and B schools. Analysis of teacher and school leader transcripts revealed that 85% of interviews contained positive comments related to the impact of Starpath on whānau/parent/carer engagement in school. Improving relationships and communication between teachers/school leader and whānau/parents/carers across the school community was considered essential to support increases in student achievement and learning outcomes.

Whilst many teachers and school leaders reported positive changes, there were others who talked about mixed results and negative impacts in terms of student achievement, on whānau/parents/carers and on the school overall. An analysis of transcripts revealed that 27% of teacher focus groups and school leader interviews contained mixed comments related to the impact of Starpath on student achievement whilst 14% of these contained negative comments. In addition 20% of interview material contained mixed comments as to the impact on whānau/parents/carers compared with 19% that related to negative comments. 30% of teacher focus groups and school leader interviews contained mixed comments about the impact of Starpath on school overall whilst 9% of this material indicated negative comment. Content analysis of this ‘mixed’ and ‘negative’ commentary highlighted some interrelated themes:

- A lack of quality and communication about student progress across schools;
- Mixed results for different groups of students;
- Concerns about the variability of NCEA standards implementation, including a lack of ownership of the programme, a lack of impact on teacher/school practice variability in teacher/School Leader expertise and practices related to tracking and monitoring of student achievement; and
- Concerns about whether any impact could be attributable to Starpath.

While these negative aspects into account the overall analysis suggests that having seen the early benefits and the potential for further improvement in student outcomes, the teachers and teachers are supportive of the programme continuing. In many schools the practices have become the norm and are becoming embedded as part of “how we do things”. Most evaluation participants were adamant that they would not want to go back to previous systems and practices. As one teacher expressed it, “It’s done too much good to go back.”

### Summer Scholar

#### Success in science subjects at university

A Project Outputs

**Project Outputs**

(1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015)

#### Published articles


#### Conference presentations

- Kim, C. Culture, Empathy and Future: Presentation at the International Posts of Empathy Research Symposium, Ontario, Canada. 28 March 2015.
- Wilson, A., & McNaughton, K. The Starpath Project: An Invitation to Achieve Equity Outcomes on the course EDP3917 T101 issues in Literacy Education. Seminars held to June 2015 are listed below.

#### Other presentations

Wilson, A. Improving subject achievement through more effective subject literacy instruction. Presentation to all students enrolled in the Prog Graduates Diploma of Education (Secondary) programme for 2014. 21 and 22 October 2014.

Wilson, A. Improving subject achievement through more effective subject literacy instruction. Presentation to the 2015 cohort of The First NZ programme 3 and 17 December 2014.


Tumblin, S. & Irving, S.E., Presented findings from Summer Scholar research on What is the relationship between success in science subjects at university and at school? to Associate Dean (Academic) Faculty of Science, University of Auckland, 19 February 2015.


Hynds, A. & Raggi, M. Starpath research display at the Celebrating Research Excellence event, City Campus, University of Auckland. The annual event highlights research achievements at the University. 5 May 2015.

Eaton, J. Update on the Starpath project to Uniservice meeting at Somerclt. 25 May 2015.

#### Starpath seminars, workshops and lectures

- Aaron Wilson lectures on Starpath as an intervention to achieve equity outcomes on the course EDP3917 T101 issues in Literacy Education. Seminars held to June 2015.
- Aaron Wilson references Starpath, especially literacy data, in other courses taught EDCUR5556 and 5577 (ENGLISH teaching), with Teach First NZ students, and with Woolf Fisher Lead Teacher Scholarship students under his supervision. Seminars held to June 2015.

#### Joint Research Seminar Series

**Te Puna Whānui and the Starpath Project**

Dr Peter Keegan (Senior Lecturer, Te Puna Whānui) and Associate Professor Anne Hynds (Director: Starpath Project) presented a joint research seminar series held at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland. The seminar series is entitled, ‘Equity, education and achievement. What research tells us about the contradictions and complexities?’. Held on the third Wednesday of each month the series has been attended by PhD students, outside visitors, international guests, and colleagues from the University. Seminars held to June 2015 are listed below.

April 22nd: Professor Alison Jones (Te Puna Whānui) A whipassports of New Zealand’s first school book.

May 10th: Dr Peter Keegan (Te Puna Whānui) Developing tools to improve the pronunciation of Māori language.

June 7th: Professor C. Kiro, Dr. L. Madjar, Dr. E. Irving & Associate Professor A. Hynds (Starpath). Where are we now? Update on the Starpath Project.

#### Model references

- Professor Liz McKinley and Dr Aaron Wilson present at Starpath so in this Not attended as part of Kae Kae Parakou: Building on Success (BOP) 13 March 2015.
- Professor Liz McKinley and Dr Aaron Wilson present at Kiriwhakapapakura: Building on Success (BOP) 11 March 2015.
- Professor Liz McKinley attended a meeting of the Benchmarks for Progress sub-group of the Ministerial Cross Sector Reference Group for Raising Student Achievement. 29 July 2014.
- Professor Rawen Dzolle, Professor Liz McKinley and Joy Eaton met with Chris Harwood, Elizabeth Elyay and Brett Mylne from the Ministry of Education on Year 9 and 10 and Milestone Report 3. 31 July 2014.
- Professor Liz McKinley attended a meeting of the Ministerial Cross Sector Forum on Raising Student Achievement. 5 August 2014.
- Professor Cindy Kiro attended the Ministerial Cross Sector Forum (MCSF) in Wellington with Graham Stoop and Lisa Rodgers. 13 March 2015.

### Ministerial meetings and visits

- Professor Liz McKinley and Dr Aaron Wilson present at Starpath so in this Not attended as part of Kae Kae Parakou: Building on Success (BOP) 13 March 2015.
- Professor Liz McKinley and Dr Aaron Wilson present at Kiriwhakapapakura: Building on Success (BOP) 11 March 2015.
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- Professor Cindy Kiro attended the Ministerial Cross Sector Forum (MCSF) in Wellington with Graham Stoop and Lisa Rodgers. 13 March 2015.
Project media coverage

(1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015)


February 2015. NCEA and the alternatives. Dr Earl Irving comments on the lack of data enabling any robust comparison between NCEA, IB and CIE. NZ Education Review.

6 March 2015. Cindy Kiro is interviewed on Morning Report, she says it is unacceptable that Māori and Pasifika have had the biggest drop in the University Entrance pass rate. Radio NZ.


22 April 2015. Paerata College to begin its Starpath journey. Paerata College to begin a programme based on Starpath. Waikato Times.

3 June 2015. NZOHM honours homegrown educator.

Professor Elizabeth McIntyre is made an officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit. Waipapa Times.


23 June 2015. Professor Cindy Kiro on the rise in Māori student achievement in some areas, but how there’s still a lot of work that needs to be done to boost it further. Radio NZ (Te Manu Koria, Morning Report).

29 June 2015. Data key to fixing educational inequality. Interview with Tamaki College. Stuff.co.nz.


- Dr Earl Irving attended a meeting with Mōlā Wellington to discuss Student Management Systems (SMS) and their functionality for schools. 27 March 2015.
- Graham Stoop and Lisa Rodgers from Mōlā visited Starpath. Starpath attendees were Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond, Professor Kiro, Associate Professor Hynds, Dr Madjar, Dr Irving, Joy Eaton, Tania Lenkic-Richardson, Morgan Mangi, Victoria Coolick, Stephen McTaggart. (Professor Atiken by Skype). 10 May 2015.
- Associate Professor Anne Hynds attended the Ministerial Cross Sector Forum in Wellington. 21 May 2015.

Other meetings and events with key stakeholders

- Associate Professor Hynds and Joy Eaton met with Irena Hobtold (Chief Review Officer) and Dale Bailey (Deputy Chief Review Officer, Northern Region) from Education Review Office: update on Starpath progress. 30 January 2015.
- Professor Cindy Kiro met with Minister of Education for Ontario Liz Sanders, Assistant Deputy Ministers of education and Aboriginal Affairs, Premier of Ontario Kathleen Wynne, Chief Ian Campbell from British Columbia and local elder Kat Kruger from the Longhouse nation; and visited a large multi-cultural urban school in downtown Toronto. March 2015.
- Dr Anne Hynds and Dr Earl Irving introduced Visiting Professor Tony Bryk (from the US based Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) to Starpath and took him to visit Mangere College. 17 March 2015.
- Professor Kiro, Joy Eaton, Dr Irena Madjar and Dr Earl Irving met with the Chancellor and Senior Staff from the University of Saskatchewan when they visited the Faculty of Education. Te Puna Wānanga hosted the party for the morning; at the request of the PVC Māori who also attended. April 2015.
- Joy Eaton attended Learning Auckland Leadership Table (organised by COMET Auckland), a meeting to discuss the learning plan for Auckland City. 30 April 2015.
- Professor Cindy Kiro hosted a meeting for the Starpath team to update Mārosia Wall and David Cutiflue on the project. 21 April 2015.
- Professor Kiro is a panellist for the Prime Minister’s Awards for Education Excellence.

The panel met for the first time on 6 May with meetings and site visits to candidates between May and June 2015.

- Associate Professor Anne Hynds and Joy Eaton met with Trudie McNaughton and Equity Office staff. 28 May 2015.
- Professor David, Professor Kiro, Associate Professor Hynds and Joy Eaton met with Foundation North (AIT Trust) CEO, Jenny Gill. 10 June 2015.
- Professor Liz McKinley attended the TUI Board meeting chaired by Lisa Rodgers. 16 June 2015.
- Starpath hosted Dr Armita Barj from Stanford University. Associate Professor Anne Hynds and Joy Eaton took her to Onehunga High School. 17 June 2015.
- Starpath hosted 3 researchers from Charles Darwin University. They are working with remote aboriginal communities in Australia. 16 June 2015.

Starpath Events

- Starpath Principals’ Day. The event is held for all Principals from Starpath’s partner schools. The main theme was Towards Sustainability. Dr Graham Stoop and Lesley Hoskin from the Ministry of Education were also in attendance. Novotel Ellerslie. 3 July 2014.